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The Nation

In Summary

STAT

The C.I.A. Must Apologize



Nicolas Asche

Dear _____:

The purpose of this letter is to extend to you the sincerest regrets of the United States Government for any harm you may have experienced as a result of the interference with mail.

—THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

So begins a proposed apology to three citizens whose mail to and from the Soviet Union had been opened by the Central Intelligence Agency in the course of its 20-year-long domestic surveillance project. Judge Jack B. Weinstein in Federal District Court in Brooklyn last week ordered that an apology, \$1,000 in damages and court costs be sent to each of the three. They had sued for invasion of privacy.

The damages, Judge Weinstein said, were compensatory, not punitive. Last May, an advisory jury was unanimous in finding that the agency had acted improperly but the jurors were divided on the proper compensation for the victims. Some recommended awards of \$10,000 for "mental anguish," one proposed \$2,500 because "a written Government apology is worth more than the money."

How much the proposed apology would be worth to people who Judge Weinstein found had suffered "actual mental pain, outrage and shock" is not measurable. The letter, to be signed by an unspecified senior official, notes the questionable legality of the agency's domestic mail-opening. It nowhere deals with the question of right or wrong.

Of Human Behavior

Disclosures last week about the Central Intelligence Agency's 25-year-long mind-control project demonstrate anew the agency's eagerness to learn how to manipulate human behavior.

Newly declassified agency records show that under the cover of developing anticancer and other benevolent drugs the agency sponsored a six-year search for a knockout drug derived from natural body fluids. The search may have involved tests on human as well as animal subjects.

According to the research proposal, scientists were supposed to analyze vital fluids taken from comatose or delirious patients to discover the biochemical mechanisms of what are called natural toxic psychoses. The designated subjects were patients (many dying), in whom some vital organ would have failed, causing them to pass from mild mental disorientation into delirium and coma. Liver or kidney failure, advanced cancer and severe infection can all produce toxic cerebral states. The fluids were to be taken from the spine, the abdomen and the lungs.

The agency documents were heavily censored before they were released, and do not indicate where or whether this set of experiments on human took place; other records have detailed other human tests.